

For sale: 'Big House' with a prison view

Bill Cary, The (Westchester County, N.Y.) Journal News 9:35 a.m. EDT October 3, 2013

Former superintendent's residence overlooking storied Sing Sing facility up for auction.



(Photo: Frank Becerra Jr., The Westchester County, N.Y., Journal News)



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In a real estate market where everyone is talking about a tight inventory, with not enough homes coming on the market to meet the demand, a plain-Jane Dutch Colonial revival (<http://www.lohud.com/article/20130927/NEWS02/309270042/For-auction-Ossining-house-prison-view>) in Ossining, N.Y., with a not-so-ordinary history could be yours.

All you need is a minimum bid of \$245,000, with 10 percent down, and a willingness to live in a smallish house overlooking the Big House. This 1,600-square-foot two-bedroom property at 318 Spring St. is the former superintendent's house for the Sing Sing Correctional Facility and it looks down on the riverfront prison.

On Oct. 17 at the Peekskill Armory, the state Office of General Services is holding a public auction of the single-family home that sits on nearly an acre of hilly land in the town and village of Ossining. A second property, 3.215 acres of vacant, unimproved land in the town of Kent, will also be auctioned that day.

The state is hosting open houses on Oct. 4 and 10 for potential buyers to check out the digs. No bars on the windows here, just lots of brightly painted walls — as in pink, maroon and lavender — and one full bathroom.

Additional amenities include an attached two-car garage, sunroom, a half-bath, hardwood floors, paved driveway, wide front porch and limited views of the Hudson.



[Sin revealed - USA NOW video](http://www.usanow.com/2013/10/04/sin-revealed-usa-now-video/)
Oct 04, 2013



The brightly painted two-bedroom house that once belonged to the superintendent of the Sing Sing Correctional Facility sits on nearly an acre and overlooks the prison. (Photo: Provided to *The Westchester County, N.Y., Journal News*)

A good deal of sweat equity may have gone into this Colonial.

And if you notice any roses in the yard, they might be hardy survivors from the era of legendary newspaperman Charles Chapin, who killed his wife and then headed upriver to become the famous "Rose Man of Sing Sing." In the 1920s, Chapin planted more than 2,000 rose bushes in the prison yard.

He also did a good deal of gardening around the former warden's brick house, which sits next door to the one being auctioned. Lewis Lawes, the reform-minded warden at the time, befriended Chapin, frequently inviting him into his own home.

"He was in and out of that house quite a bit," says Norm MacDonald, the curator of the Ossining Historical Society museum.

The former warden's house dates to the 1920s, MacDonald says, and the one being auctioned "may have been used as the warden's house prior to the building of the brick house."

"Superintendent" became the preferred title for wardens beginning in the late 1960s, says Art Wolpinsky, a 42-year correction officer and the facility historian at Sing Sing.

Whatever the title, they often offered this two-bedroom house as a residence for various managers at the prison.

Or for more personal reasons — Lawes had his barber installed in the house while he was warden, Wolpinsky says.

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